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Route To:

Subject: Potential FY 2008 Forest Health Project in Los Griegos WUI

To: Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest

In July, Dave Conklin of our staff met with Bill Armstrong (SFNF) to examine portions of the Los Griegos WUI (Units 1–4) on the Jemez District. Dan Key (Jemez RD) and Jerry Simon (SFNF, detail) joined Bill and Dave for an examination of Units 3 and 4. A total of 492 acres in these four units may be proposed for treatment in FY 2008 using a combination of Forest Health (I &D) and Fuels funding.

Stand conditions throughout these four units are extremely heterogeneous, but include both ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forest. Little or no thinning has occurred in the past 30 to 50 years. Basal areas often exceed 150 ft^2/acre, with densities exceeding 300 to 500 trees/acre in many portions. Several age/size classes are well-represented. Site quality is fair to high (70 to 90+), varying with the rolling topography within this landscape. Mortality in recent years has contributed to heavy fuel-loading in some stands.

Dwarf mistletoe is common in the Los Griegos area in both the ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir components. Overall, disease incidence is much lower (and site quality higher) in Units 1 and 2 than in Units 3 and 4. The ridge-tops and upper slopes within the latter units generally have severe and extensive infestation of the ponderosa pine, with Douglas-fir mistletoe more abundant on the lower slopes. However, both mistletoes are present in many portions of Units 3 and 4, making treatment of these areas problematic. In Units 1 and 2, the majority of the ponderosa pine component is healthy.

Treatment of these areas (by contract) would most likely be implemented using a combination of machine mastication and cutting. It is anticipated that larger material would be utilized for firewood and other products. The prescription would favor healthy ponderosa pine (where present) throughout these units. Healthy Douglas-fir (where present) would be favored in areas with pine mistletoe or where pine is absent or infrequent. Spacing of leave trees would be highly irregular. Basal areas should be reduced to 40 to 80 ft^2 throughout most of these areas (reducing bark beetle susceptibility). Thinning and removal of conifers would favor small aspen clones in some areas. All existing white pines should be retained. We would also recommend retaining occasional groups of healthy ponderosa pine regeneration (VSS 1 and 2), where present; perhaps some hand-thinning could be utilized in these situations.

Removal of all mistletoe-infected trees from these stands is probably unrealistic (especially given latency), and unnecessary. Where infestation is extensive, retention of scattered groups should

enhance visual appeal, yield more diverse wildlife habitat, and help maintain a seed source--without compromising fuels-reduction objectives.

Because of the high disease severity and paucity of good leave-trees in many portions of Units 3 and 4, we think that treatment here should be a lower priority than in Units 1 and 2. Units 1 and 2 provide a very good opportunity to promote pine and lessen conversion to shade-tolerant species; moreover, thinning here should provide a much more visually-appealing (and more productive) post-treatment condition. However, from a fuels perspective, each of the four units could benefit from prudent treatment.

Please contact Dave Conklin at (505) 842-3288 if you have questions about this evaluation.

/s/ Dave Conklin (for)
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